

POSITION STATEMENT

Support for the Home Stretch campaign

Queensland
Family & Child
Commission

Summary

- The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) supports the Home Stretch campaign's call to extend support for young people in out-of-home care until the age of 21 years.
- Around Australia it is increasingly common for young people to remain in their family home after they turn 18, while they study and/or transition into paid work.
- Young people leaving out-of-home care should also have support during this transitional phase.

The QFCC supports the Home Stretch campaign's call to extend support for young people in out-of-home care until the age of 21 years.

Currently, in Queensland, young people in out-of-home care are expected to transition to independence when they turn 18.

The Queensland *Charter of Rights for Children in Care* includes the right to 'receive appropriate help with the transition from being a child in care to independence, including, for example, help about housing, access to income support and training and education'.¹

To achieve this, the Queensland Government provides access to support, such as the Transition to Independent Living Allowance and access to the Next Steps Plus program, until a young person turns 25.

However, young people are still expected to leave their foster, kinship or residential care placements as soon as they turn 18.

Young people leaving out-of-home care need support to protect their basic rights. They are significantly more likely than other young people to experience homelessness, unemployment and contact with the justice system.²


The CREATE Foundation has recently released its report, *Out-of-home care in Australia: Children and young people's views after five years of national standards*, outlining the findings of consultation with children who have experience with the out-of-home care system.³

Encouragingly, most children surveyed were not significantly concerned about the process of transitioning to independence. However, the children who did express concern were more likely to be young women, children approaching the age of 18, and those living in residential care.

These young people raised issues about finding a job, finding somewhere to live, and managing their finances.

The *Child Protection Act 1999* does provide for transition to independence planning for children in out-of-home care from the age of 15. While these plans can be helpful, young people also need guaranteed, accessible support to make this transition successfully.

Around Australia it is increasingly common for young people to remain in their family home well after they turn 18, while they study and transition into paid work.⁴ Young people leaving out-of-home care should also have support during this transitional phase.



Providing care to young people until the age of 21 will provide a foundation to help them transition into education, training and work.

This support should be guaranteed for those who need and want it. It should not require oversight by the state, since young people over the age of 18 years are not children and do not require the same level of protection.

Whether in kinship care, foster care or residential care, young people should have support between the ages of 18 and 21 years to make sure they are safe and have opportunities to succeed.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

The QFCC is a statutory authority of the Queensland Government. Established in 2014, the QFCC provides oversight of the family and child support system, with an aim to bring children's rights to life. Through awareness, advocacy and accountability, we seek to give practical effect to the rights of all children and young people in Queensland.

We use position statements to advocate for and bring awareness to the need for systemic change where Queensland children are experiencing inequity in the enjoyment of their inalienable rights.

¹ *Child Protection Act 1999*, schedule 1 (k).

² Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (Cth) 2010, *Transitioning from out of home care to independence*, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/trans_to_ind.pdf, accessed 18 May 2020.

³ CREATE Foundation 2021, *Out-of-home care in Australia: Children and young people's views after five years of national standards*.

⁴ Australian Institute of Family Studies 2019, *More young adults living at home with their parents*, <https://aifs.gov.au/media-releases/more-young-adults-living-home-their-parents>, accessed 20 May 2021.